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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4740
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0963
RUEHSL/AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA 0016
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 9735
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 0224
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4212
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1668
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3395
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0406
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 6832
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4446
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 0800
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0802
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0485
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2734
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0377
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000887

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/19/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: UN RANGOON PROBES FOR OPENING IN BURMESE LEADERSHIP

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Classified By: CDA: SVillarosa for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

11. (C) Summary: Onder Yucer, the temporary UN Resident Coordinator in Rangoon met with Charge on June 27 to discuss his efforts to persuade the GOB to loosen restrictive guidelines on humanitarian organizations, as well as the UN's role in negotiating some sort of political transition. He met June 26 with the Minister of Planning, and expressed hope that he convinced the Minister to loosen the restrictive guidelines issued in February. Yucer also complained about recent NLD letters to keep the Secretary General involved in political discussions, and expressed surprise at the lack of GOB interest in engaging with the international financial institutions. While he came across as naive, we encouraged his efforts to push for greater humanitarian access. End summary.

12. (C) On June 27, Onder Yucer, the UN's temporary Resident Coordinator briefed Charge on his recent efforts to engage the GOB to loosen restrictive guidelines for humanitarian assistance and to negotiate some sort of political transition. Yucer indicated eagerness to follow up on U/SYG Gambari's May 18-20 visit to probe for more positive engagement by the GOB. The UN Resident Coordinator had sent a letter to Planning Minister Soe Tha urging the GOB to loosen restrictions on humanitarian organizations. A second letter to Prime Minister Soe Win, approved by Gambari, was "more upbeat," according to Yucer, and listed large humanitarian programs, such as the \$6 million collected for a polio vaccine campaign, the new "Three Diseases Fund", and UNICEF programs that could proceed if the GOB provided greater access. Both letters urged the two sides to talk "face-to-face," which led to the Planning Minister's

invitation to meet.

Increasing Humanitarian Access

¶13. (C) Yucer met with Planning Minister Soe Tha June 26. He recommended to the Minister that the guidelines for humanitarian assistance providers should not contain layers of restrictions to address the one or two exceptional cases when the GOB experienced some problems, but rather, should embrace the principles of humanitarian assistance and international development cooperation adopted by the UN. The Minister, after first defending the new regulations, ultimately acknowledged that the guidelines were not etched in stone and could be looked at again. Yucer expressed hope that the GOB would inform donors at their next meeting, set for the end of July, of revised regulations. He planned to follow up with the Minister, who told him, "Please call me any time." Charge encouraged him to proceed, saying that opening space for humanitarian assistance would reverse the steady narrowing of space for those organizations to operate noted over the past few years.

¶14. (C) Yucer expressed surprise that the Planning Minister did not seem aware of how the GOB could benefit from development assistance from the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, or International Monetary Fund. He found the Minister uninformed about upcoming IMF Article IV consultations, and how they could pave the way for hundreds of millions of dollars in assistance (which did attract the Minister's interest). Charge explained that Burma had been cut off from IFI programs for two decades, and that it would not be able to regain access without significant economic and political reforms. Yucer suggested that academics and technical specialists might meet to discuss and recommend a plan of action for Burma to regain access to IFI programs.

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UN as a Political Negotiator

¶15. (C) Yucer described his meeting with the Planning Minister as a sign of "the door opening a crack," for GOB engagement with the UN as well on the political process. He detected "some softening" in the GOB posture, citing Gambari's visit and pressure at the recent ILO meeting. We are at a crossroads, he said, and wanted to explore the potential UN role if there were to be change in the GOB's political position. "Should the Secretary General become more involved?" he wondered aloud. Charge answered that many Burmese strongly welcome the involvement of the Secretary General and his representatives. He also repeatedly described the UN role as a "negotiator," to which the Charge replied that representatives of all the Burmese people must negotiate to reach any durable resolution. The role for the international community would be to facilitate those negotiations. Yucer inquired about the USG response to movement by the GOB. The Charge replied that the USG would respond to sincere reform efforts, meaning concrete action, not just words.

¶16. (C) Yucer said, "someone should advise the NLD" not to write letters to the Secretary General, because UN diplomacy is fragile, and needs to stay "discreet and cool." He added that UN resrep Petrie was "deeply hurt" by the letters. Charge explained that NLD leaders understood Gambari and Petrie as urging NLD to join the National Convention without conditions. Yucer replied that Gambari made it clear that concessions would be required of both sides to find "common ground." He told Senior General Than Shwe that they must allow political parties to freely operate, free political prisoners, and include Aung San Suu Kyi in any political dialogue. He also claimed that Gambari had "full access" during his visit, which Charge challenged noting that Gambari had been blocked from visiting UN offices in Rangoon. Yucer acknowledged that "fistfights almost broke out" over that issue and clarified that Gambari had extensive meetings with

the senior generals and Aung San Suu Kyi.

17. (C) Charge suggested that the various political entities might need help in basic negotiating concepts, such as compromise, to establish a foundation for successful negotiations. Yucer asked whether a Special Negotiator should be appointed, adding (contrary to information received elsewhere) that it had never been decided that UNDP Rangoon would be the "negotiator." Charge recommended someone, who could bring all sides together to start talking, would be most helpful. She added that active engagement by UN Headquarters would keep the pressure on the military leaders to deliver action, which Gambari had noted would be required.

18. (C) Comment: Yucer came across as nave, which is understandable given his arrival just a month ago. He is a retired UN civil servant (a UN WAE), who worked most recently in China and North Korea. He also mentioned working in Sierra Leone and Yemen in the past. He was brought in to act as the UN resrep during the three month sabbatical of Charles Petrie. In order to capitalize on the Gambari visit, we welcome Yucer's eagerness to push for greater access to humanitarian organizations. However, he does not appear at this point to possess sufficient information on Burma's history to make an effective political negotiator and bring the diverse political entities together. End comment.
VILLAROSA